



**May 17, 2005**

## **Warwick man admits interstate domestic violence**

**Joseph Nicolella**, of Warwick, has pleaded guilty to federal charges of interstate domestic violence for driving his estranged wife from Rhode Island to Connecticut and assaulting her there.

United States Attorney Robert Clark Corrente announced the guilty plea, which Nicolella entered yesterday before Chief U.S. District Court Judge Ernest C. Torres in U.S. District Court, Providence.

At the plea hearing, Assistant U.S. Attorney Gerard B. Sullivan said that, had the case gone to trial, the government would have proven that Nicolella met his estranged wife outside a liquor store in Chepachet on December 5 and convinced her to take him for a ride in her car. While they were parked in a wooded area, he assaulted her. When she tried to escape, he pulled her back into the vehicle and took over driving. He drove into Connecticut on Route 44, telling her, "We're going to Connecticut because cops don't know me there."

Nicolella drove to a location on River Road in Killingly, where he continued to assault his wife. Nicolella's sister, who had apparently followed them in another vehicle, joined them for a while in his wife's car.

While Nicolella was distracted, the victim escaped and, after getting no assistance from Nicolella's sister, who had returned to her own car, the victim ran and flagged down a

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passing truck. The truck driver called 911 but when Connecticut State Police arrived, Nicolella and his sister had left. Gloucester Police and Rhode Island State Police arrested him in Lincoln on December 10.

In October 2004, Nicolella's wife obtained a Judgment of Protection in Rhode Island Family Court, protecting her from Nicolella, and at least two "no contact" orders had been entered against him. Nicolella was convicted of domestic assault in 2003 and 2004 and was sentenced to 30 days in prison for violating probation from the first conviction.

Nicolella pleaded guilty to four charges: traveling interstate to commit a crime of domestic violence, traveling interstate to violate a domestic protection order, taking his wife across state lines in the commission of a domestic violence offense, and taking her across state lines in violation of a protection order. The maximum penalty for each offense is five years in federal prison and a \$250,000 fine.

Nicolella, 40, of 85 Adrian Avenue, Warwick, is held at the Rhode Island Adult Correctional Institutions, pending sentencing, which is scheduled for August 11.

The **Federal Bureau of Investigation, Rhode Island State Police, Gloucester Police,** and the **Connecticut State Police** investigated the case. Assistant U.S. Attorney Gerard B. Sullivan is prosecuting it.

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